

Special Research Grants Program Aquaculture Research

2014 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: **June 25, 2014**



U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SPECIAL RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM: AQUACULTURE RESEARCH

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.200**.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **June 25, 2014**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Aquaculture Research RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Aquaculture Research program for fiscal year (FY) 2014 to fund projects in the areas of aquaculture genetics, disease, production systems, and economics. The approximate amount available to support this program in FY 2014 is \$1,350,000.

The Aquaculture Research program will support environmental and economic sustainability of the aquaculture industry in the United States. NIFA partners with other federal, regional, and state programs engaged in conducting and funding aquaculture research, education, and extension projects. NIFA coordinates its mission activities related to aquaculture with other federal departmental representatives (e.g., US Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, EPA, FDA) at the national level through the Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture under the Life Science Subcommittee of the Committee on Science in the National Science and Technology Council of the Executive Office of the President.

This RFA identifies priorities for applied Aquaculture Research projects, the eligibility criteria for applicants, the application forms for proposal submission, and associated instructions needed to apply for an Aquaculture Research grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The authority for this program is contained in the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, Pub. L. No. 89-106, as amended (7 USC 450i(c)(1)(A)).

B. Purpose and Priorities

Aquaculture contributes more than half of the seafood consumed globally, and this contribution is expected to grow to about two-thirds by 2030 (World Bank, 2014). The recent FAO (2012) report “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)” showed significant growth in the global aquaculture sector in the past decade. However, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Census of Aquaculture, there was no significant growth in the U.S. aquaculture industry between 1998 and 2004. The U.S. currently has an approximately \$11.5 billion trade deficit in seafood products and more than 85% of seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported. The factors that limit aquaculture in the U.S. are complex and multifaceted. Applied research in genetics, disease, production systems, and economics is needed to develop practical solutions that will facilitate growth of the U.S. aquaculture industry. This research will help reduce the U.S. trade deficit in seafood products and enhance the capacity of the U.S. aquaculture industry to contribute to domestic and global food security and economic growth.

Priorities defined in this RFA directly align with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan (<http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-ree-science-action-plan.pdf>) and specifically addresses: Goal 1. Local and Global Food Supply and Security; Goal 2. Responding to Climate and Energy Needs; and Goal 3. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.

Stakeholder Input

The Aquaculture Research program described herein was developed within the context of the authorized purposes and mission of USDA and NIFA research, extension, and education programs and activities. NIFA receives input from Congress, the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board as well as university, scientific, and agricultural committees and organizations. Stakeholder input is documented on the NIFA web site (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/stakeholder.html>) and is considered when developing and updating Program Area Descriptions and Priorities each year.

The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) report on “Agricultural Preparedness & the Agricultural Research Enterprise” (www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast_agriculture_20121207.pdf), released on December 7, 2012, recommended Federal investment in three main areas: research support, training and workforce development, and research infrastructure. The PCAST report also recommended an “emphasis on basic research as well as managing the risks associated with emerging threats such as new

pests and pathogens, limited water availability, environmental impacts of agriculture on human and environmental health, or adaptation to a changing climate.”

Every five years, NIFA and the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) conduct joint stakeholder listening sessions for obtaining aquaculture-specific stakeholder input. In July, August, and September of 2013, NIFA and ARS conducted a series of stakeholder web-conference listening sessions and meetings. The needs of customers and stakeholders were received and a series of polling questions was asked. The summary of the web-conferences and onsite listening sessions along with survey results can be found at:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/Program/106/Stakeholder%20Webinar%20Input%20Summary%206.pdf>. NIFA considers this information carefully when developing new RFA priorities and revising the NIFA Strategic Plan and the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan.

C. Program Area Description

The purpose of the Aquaculture Research program is to support the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable aquaculture industry in the U.S. and generate new science-based information and innovation to address industry constraints. Over the long term, results of projects supported by this program may help improve the profitability of the U.S. aquaculture industry, reduce the U.S. trade deficit, increase domestic food security, provide markets for U.S.-produced grain products, increase domestic aquaculture business investment opportunities, and provide more jobs for rural and coastal America.

The Aquaculture Research program for FY 2014 will fund projects that directly address major constraints to the U.S. aquaculture industry and focus on one or more of the following program priorities:

1. Genetics of commercial aquaculture species.
2. Critical disease issues impacting aquaculture species.
3. Design of environmentally and economically sustainable aquaculture production systems.
4. Economic research for increasing aquaculture profitability.

Other key information:

- This program is limited to applied aquaculture research proposals.
- Applicants must clearly describe how their specific research project will advance aquaculture in the U.S. in the short (2-5 years) and medium term (5-10 years).
- All applications must adhere to the requirements beginning in Part IV.
- If experimental animals are used, applications must include power analyses. Studies comparing treatment groups must justify the sample size for each experimental group, considering the

magnitude of the treatment difference for the response variable, standard deviation for the response variable, power, and level of significance (i.e., probability of making a type I error).

- If diagnostic tests are developed, a validation plan must be provided.
- If microarray studies are included, applicants must include a statement addressing Minimum Information about Microarray Experiment (MIAME) compliance (see www.mged.org).
- Applicants must provide a plan to release research results to the public in a timely manner and provide a description and budgeted plan for the release of research results (e.g., sequence data, germplasm, genetic resources) that is compliant with the terms and conditions that govern USDA NIFA funded projects in Aquaculture, where applicable, especially page 5 (Genetic Resources from Outside of the U.S); pages 6-8 (Patents and Inventions including Plant Variety Protection); and pages 10-12 (Release of Animal or Plant Genome Sequence Data and Distribution of Animal or Plant Genomic Resources, Release or Distribution of Animal Quantitative Trait Loci, and the Release or Distribution of Plant Germplasm). Terms and conditions can be found at: www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/rtc/agency specifics/nifa_413.pdf
- The inclusion of students actively engaged in the scholarship of the research projects, particularly the inclusion of undergraduate student interns and trainees, graduate students, and post-doctoral research associates to provide hands-on, experiential learning and training opportunities is strongly encouraged. Actively engaged students should be encouraged to contribute to presentations, articles, posters, and other expressions of scholarship that reflect their own work on the project.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2014 is approximately \$1,350,000. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2014, you must submit applications to the Aquaculture Research program as a **new application**.

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the Aquaculture Research Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

This program will make research awards up to \$300,000 (total project, not per year) for project duration of up to 3 years.

D. Project Periods

Project periods should be limited to 2 years. Recipients may be eligible for a no-cost extension for a third year, but no carryover or extension is permitted for any projects beyond 3 years. Any unexpended funds must be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

E. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, we consider education in RCR essential to the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 7 CFR Part 3022, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Per award terms and conditions,

grant recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and to support the conduct of the training.

Note that the training referred to herein shall be either on-campus or off-campus training. The general content of the ethics training will, at a minimum, emphasize three key areas of research ethics: authorship and plagiarism, data and research integration, and reporting misconduct. Each institution will be responsible for developing its own training system, as schools will need flexibility to develop training tailored to their specific student needs. Grantees should consider the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program for RCR (<https://www.citiprogram.org/rcrpage.asp>). Typically this RCR education addresses the topics of: Data Acquisition and Management - collection, accuracy, security, access; Authorship and Publication; Peer Review; Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities; Collaboration; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and Use of Animals in Research.

F. Scientific Peer Review

Subsection (c)(5) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 450i(c)(5)), requires applicants to conduct scientific peer review of their proposed research activities prior to the Secretary making a grant award under this authority. Regulations implementing this requirement are set forth in 7 CFR Part 3400.20.

The regulations impose the following requirements:

(1) Scientific peer review. Prior to the award of a standard or continuation grant, any proposed research project shall have undergone a review arranged by the grantee. Such review must be a scientific peer review conducted in accordance with 7 CFR 3400.21. It must be credible, independent, and arranged by the grantee. It should provide an appraisal of technical quality and relevance sufficient for an organizational representative to make an informed judgment as to whether the proposal is appropriate for submission for federal support. Often this review is conducted by faculty peers. It may include USDA employees, but should not be conducted solely by USDA employees. Although evidence of a scientific peer review is not required until an award is ready to be finalized, peer reviews can improve the quality of a proposal. For this reason, we encourage applicants to have proposals peer reviewed before submission.

(2) Notice of completion and retention of records: A notice of completion of the review shall be conveyed in writing to NIFA as part of the Other Attachments (Field 12. of the R&R Other Project Information Form). The written notice constitutes certification by the applicant that a review in compliance with these regulations has occurred. Applicants are not required to submit results of the review to NIFA; however, proper documentation of the review process and results should be retained by the applicant. The notice should state "In accordance with 7 CFR 3400.21 this memo is to certify that this project [title] has undergone a scientific peer review." If this notification is included within the application, a signature is not necessary. If, however, it is submitted to NIFA after the application is submitted through Grants.gov, the memo must be on the institution's letterhead and signed by the Authorized Representative.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, all colleges and universities, other research institutions and organizations, Federal agencies, private organizations or corporations, and individuals for the purpose of conducting research, extension, or education activities to facilitate or expand promising breakthroughs in areas of the food and agricultural sciences of importance to the United States. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-SRGP-004532** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) or submitting the application, refer to resources available on the

Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>).
Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support

800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET).
Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

Grants.gov provides online tools to assist if you do not own PDF-generating software. You will find PDF conversion software at <http://test.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048

- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of Aquaculture Research. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative. The Project Narrative shall not exceed 18 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced including figures and tables. Appendices such as support letters to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project; and they are not included in the 18 page limit.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

1) Introduction

- a) Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project.
- b) Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project.
- c) Describe ongoing or recently completed activities significant to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel.
- d) Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. All works cited should be referenced (see c. Field 9 Bibliography & References Cited below).

2) Rationale and Significance

- a) Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project; and reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution
- b) Describe the specific relationship of the project's objectives to one of the topical areas or program priorities. Applications that do not address at least one Program Area Priority will not be reviewed; and
- c) The potential long-range improvement in and sustainability of U.S. agriculture and food systems should be shown clearly. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

- d) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing state-federal food and agricultural research, education and extension programs.
- e) The role of stakeholders in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation as appropriate.

3) Approach

The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches applied are to be clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

- a) A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
- b) Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods;
- c) Expected outcomes;
- d) Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
- e) How results or products will be used;
- f) Plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public such as extension, technology transfer, and education activities
- g) How the impacts are to be evaluated and reported;
- h) If undergraduate and graduate students, and post-doctoral research fellows are included, how they will be actively engaged in the scholarship of the research.
- i) Pitfalls that may be encountered;
- j) Limitations to proposed procedures;
- k) A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards; and
- l) A timeline for attainment of objectives and for production of deliverables that includes annual milestones with specific, measurable outcomes.

c. Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)

If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the Guide includes information about the people who require a Senior/Key Person Profile, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support, including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “AQUACULTURE RESEARCH”) and the program code (i.e., enter “AQUA”).
- b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **June 25, 2014 (5 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 716 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution’s official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed

equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition or construction of buildings or facilities.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the American Fisheries Society document *Guidelines for the Use of Fishes in Research* (2004) which can be found at:

http://fisheries.org/docs/policy_useoffishes.pdf when developing applications for submission to this RFA.

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a 2-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a review panel will technically evaluate applications that meet these requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

The evaluation criteria given below will all be weighted equally. For the proposals selected for funding, the budget justification documents are analyzed in detail by the program as well as grants management for appropriateness of the costs proposed.

1. **Relevance to program priorities:** This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to priorities stated in the RFA; How well the proposed project directly addresses major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture; and specifically focuses on one or more of the four priorities listed in the RFA.
2. **Technical/scientific merit:** This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative; if the methods are appropriate; and whether there are clear project goals and objectives; if the proposal includes all components necessary to achieve the desired outcome and an effective plan to integrate all components; if the proposal includes a concrete, unambiguous specific desired outcome and has a good chance of achieving that outcome; and if the proposal includes a way to objectively determine its success at achieving its outcomes.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant and others on the team possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and resources to accomplish the project. This includes applicant's record of achievement with previous funding, as well as the qualifications of project partners. If the proposal includes the use of outside consultants not yet identified, this criterion includes how clearly the selection factors for the outside consultants are set out, and the expected qualifications of the consultants based on those selection factors.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 555, Reston, VA, 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process, to the extent permitted by law; therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award including Institutional Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review and approval of projects using vertebrate animals, including fishes, in the research protocols.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 220—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225—Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230—Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016—USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3022—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in federally-assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in federally-assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

Project Meetings

In addition to reviewing (and monitoring the status of) progress and final technical reports and financial reports, NIFA Program Officers may use regular and periodic conference calls to monitor the awardee's performance as well as PD conferences, workshops, meetings, and symposia to not only monitor the awards, but to facilitate communication and the sharing of project results and impacts. These opportunities also serve to eliminate or minimize NIFA funding of unneeded duplicative project activities. Required attendance at these conference calls, conferences, workshops, meetings, and symposia will be identified in the RFA and the awardee should develop a proposal accordingly.

Applicants are required to attend the annual PD meeting and have to budget the costs for attending the PD meeting in their proposal.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact

Dr. Lakshmi Matukumalli
National Program Leader,
[Animal Breeding, Genetics, and Genomics](#)
Division of Animal Systems
Institute of Food Production and Sustainability
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
3443 Waterfront Centre, USDA; Mail Stop 2240
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240
Telephone: (202) 401 - 1766
E-mail: lmatumalli@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contact

Duane Alphs
Awards Management Division
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2271
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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Telephone: 202-401-4362
Email: dalphs@nifa.usda.gov

Rochelle McCrea
Awards Management Division
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2271
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2271
Telephone: 202-401-2880
Email: rmccrea@nifa.usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the NIFA Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.